

OUT OF TIME

Issue No. 44 *Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners*

Sept 1998

SPARKS FLY!

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7, 1998

7:00PM

\$7-15 SLIDING SCALE CHILDCARE PROVIDED

**JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL
WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONER
COMMISSARY FUNDRAISER**

**ANGELA DAVIS, ACTIVIST &
TEACHER**

**CHRYSTOS, POET, INDIGENOUS
LAND AND TREATY RIGHTS
ACTIVIST**

MUSICIAN INDIA COOK

WE WILL HAVE UPDATES ON THE PRISONERS

**see you at BRAVA!
2789 24th St. S.F.**

CRITICAL RESISTANCE: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex A National Conference and Strategy Session September 24-27, University of California at Berkeley

Almost two million people are currently locked up in U.S. prisons and jails, the majority of whom are people of color. Since 1980 the population of prisoners has tripled and it is expected to double again by 2005. While imprisoned populations are overwhelmingly male, the number of women prisoners is increasing at an even greater rate than men. Between 1990 and 1995, 213 new federal and state prison facilities were constructed, representing a 41% increase in prison capacity.

The conference will address the contemporary crisis occasioned by the emergence of a prison-industrial complex in the U.S. and internationally. Workshops about

BQ (rita d. brown)

Eight years in federal prisons for bank robbery attributed to the George Jackson Brigade in the mid-70s. Convicted in 1978, paroled in 1986.

I came from a classic abusive working class alcoholic family. I was a social prisoner when George Jackson was murdered, which really politicized me.

Fortunately for me, the lesbian community wherever I went was supportive. No matter what crumbly jail they put me in, it was only a matter of days before my attorney found me and hooked me back up to the community.

Inside, what kept me going was the inner strength of the women around me. You see a lot of forced drugging, untreated illness, but women always managed to befriend each other and laugh and survive despite all.

Political Prisoners featuring ex-prisoners (see articles below) are scheduled for Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. For more information, workshops schedule and the two benefit concerts contact: Critical Resistance, P.O. Box 339, Berkeley, CA 94701, phone: 510-643-2094 or EMail: critresist@aol.com or on the Web, www.prisonactivist.org/critical



Ida Robinson

photo by Jean Weisinger, *Colorlines* Fall 1998

Ida McCray Robinson

Hijacked plane to Cuba, 1972. Underground four years in Cuba, twelve years in U.S. Surfaced and convicted in 1987. Served ten years at Federal Correctional Institute, Dublin.

I left five young children behind when I was arrested. Eighty percent of women prisoners have children. These children don't have anyone to talk to in the public school system, and they're stigmatized and isolated. Many end up in foster care.

Forty-three percent of the women in Dublin are originally from other countries-Asians, Palestinians, everyone is in the jail. Yes, there is racism, but it's not the way they play it off in men's prisons. The humanity, love, and nurturing of women tends to come out, even in prison.

There was a woman inmate who had cancer and who was given six months to live. A bunch of the other prisoners and I tried to take care of her and to bring her extra food-which is illegal. Each of us knew who was supposed to get a tomato or a pear for her, so that whenever one of us got caught in pat searches, another one of us would get the food item that was taken away. You watched who got picked up so your could take their place-to get the food that she needed.



Bo (rita d. brown)

photo by Jean Weisinger, *Colorlines* Fall 1998

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Open Letter from Assata

The following is excerpted from a much longer and more detailed letter written in March, 1998. If you would like a copy of the entire letter, please send a self addressed stamped envelope to Out of Control.

My name is Assata Shakur and I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the US government's policy towards people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

I have been a political activist most of my life and although the US government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. In the 1960's, I participated in various struggles: the black liberation movement, the student rights movement, and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther Party. By 1969 the Black Panther Party had become the number one organization targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO program. Because the Black Panther Party demanded the total liberation of black people, J. Edgar Hoover called it "greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and vowed to destroy it and its leaders and activists...

I was falsely accused in six different "criminal cases" and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed did not mean that I received justice in the courts, that was certainly not the case. It only meant that the "evidence" presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them with no regard to the factual basis of such charges.

On May 2, 1973, I, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light". Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us. Because we were black and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my hands held up in the air, and then once again from the back. Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, trooper Warner Foerster was killed and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd Malik Shakur, under the

New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster. Never in my life have I felt such grief...

Although he was also unarmed and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial. We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us,



although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years. In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case...

On December 24, 1997, the New Jersey State called a press conference to announce that New Jersey Police had written a letter to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having me extradited back to New Jersey prisons. In an NBC interview, Gov. Christine Whitman of New Jersey was quoted as saying that "this has nothing to do with race, this had everything to do with crime." Either Gov. Whitman is completely unfamiliar with the facts in my case or her sensitivity to racism and the plight of black people and other people of color in the United States is at a subzero level....The basic reality in the United States is that being black is a crime and black people are always "suspects" and an accusation is usually a conviction. Most white people still think that being a "black militant"

or a "black revolutionary" is tantamount to being guilty of some kind of crime. The current situation in New Jersey's prisons underlines the racism that dominates the politics of the state of New Jersey in particular and in the US as a whole...

[Gov. Whitman] has been campaigning since she was elected into office to double the reward for my capture. In 1994, she appointed Col. Carl Williams who immediately vowed to make my capture a priority... Whitman also claimed that my return to prison should be a condition for "normalizing relations with Cuba". How did I get so important that my life can determine the foreign relations between two governments?

...Col. Williams stated "we would do everything we could to get her off the island of Cuba and if that includes kidnapping, we would do it." I guess the theory is that if they could kidnap millions of Africans from Africa 400 years ago, they should be able to kidnap one African woman today....He says the money [reward] might lure bounty hunters...

They call me the "most wanted woman" in America. I find that ironic. I've never felt very "wanted" before. When it came to jobs, I was never the "most wanted" when it came to economic opportunities, I was never the "most wanted" or when it came to decent housing. It seems like the only time Black people are on the "most wanted" list is when they want to put us in prison.

But at this moment, I am not so concerned about myself. Everyone has to die sometime and all I want is to go with dignity. I am more concerned about the growing poverty, the growing despair that is rife in America. I am more concerned about our younger generations, who represent our future. I am more concerned that one third of young black men are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the "criminal injustice" system. I am more concerned about the rise of the prison-industrial complex that is turning our people into slaves again...Our young people deserve a future and I consider it the mandate of my ancestors to be part of the struggle to insure that they have one...I urge you all, every single person who reads this statement, to fight to free all political prisoners. As the concentration camps of the US turn into death camps, I urge you to fight to abolish the death penalty. I make a special, urgent appeal to you to fight to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal...

All I have is my voice, my spirit and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask, those of you in the Black media, the progressive media, those of you who believe in truth and freedom, to publish this statement and to let people know what is happening.

SUNDIATA PAROLE DENIAL UPHELD

Sundiata Acoli was first denied parole in 1993 after serving 19 years in prison and the parole board gave him an extended future parole eligibility term of 20 years. Recently an appeals court upheld this unfair decision. Sundiata Acoli and Assata Shakur were both members of the Black Liberation Army and co-defendants in a 1973 trial in New Jersey.

celebrate El Grito de Lares

commemorating the 1868 uprising for Puerto Rico's Independence

featuring

Jose Lopez, Puerto Rican Cultural Center (Chicago)

Rafael Cancel Miranda, Puerto Rican Nationalist

Welfare Poets of New York

Los Pleneros de la 24

Thursday, September 24, 7:00 PM

Mission Cultural Center

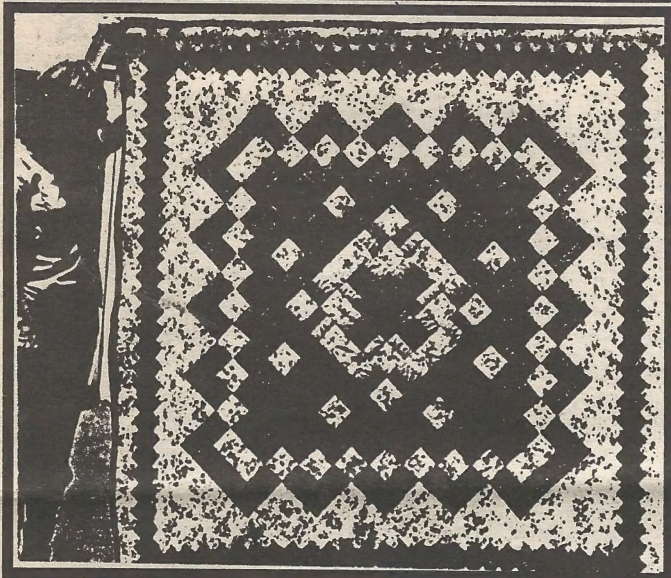
2868 Mission Street, San Francisco

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Call 510-893-3181x126 or 415-431-3594 for more info or childcare

Sponsored by Comite '98, fireworx, Comite Ad Hoc pro Lares

OUT OF TIME



QUEEN SIZE QUILT FOR SALE

Another great handmade quilt by Linda Evans, North American Anti-imperialist Political Prisoner is being offered for sale. The quilt is shades of green and burgandy with leaves and vines on a white background. They have been going for \$300, which is very reasonable for handsewn art such as this. For more information or to bid on the quilt, call 415-648-8472.

Support Theresa's Struggle for Freedom!

Theresa Cruz is a battered woman who was sentenced to seven years to life after a male friend shot her abuser in the legs. After seven and a half years of imprisonment, Theresa Cruz's conviction was overturned in April by a Federal Appeals Court based on the judge's finding that there were multiple problems with the original trial. The state of California decided to appeal this decision and on June 30th the federal judge agreed to release Theresa on \$200,000 bail during the appeals process.

Two weeks after Theresa was reunited with her four children, her mother and her grandmother, the state won an appeal of her bail, forcing Theresa to return to prison, devastating her family. What earthly purpose can be served by separating this woman from her children during a lengthy legal process? Theresa is not a flight risk. Staff at the California Institution for Women consider her a model prisoner and when she was coming up for parole they wrote letters recommending that she be released. Why is the state of California pursuing this woman in a case where no one was permanently injured? This is really cruel and unusual punishment for this battered woman and her family.

Actions like this indicate that there is a political agenda at work that has nothing to

do with the interests of justice or the protection of the citizens of California!

"Justice is a commodity that not many of us can afford."

-Theresa's mother

Please send/fax a letter to:

Office of the Attny General Dan Lungren
Public Inquiry Unit
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
fax#: 916.323.5341

Office of the District Attorney
Attn: Paul J. Phingst Hall of Justice
330 West Broadway Suite 1300
San Diego, CA 92101
fax#: 619.237-1351

If anyone has any press contacts that might be interested in doing a story on Theresa, please let us know (**California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 100 McAllister, San Francisco, CA 94102, or email to ccwp@igc.org.**)

Also, Theresa really needs to raise money for her ongoing legal expenses. **Contributions can be sent to Wells Fargo Bank, Bonita Office, 4180 Bonita Rd., Bonita, CA 91902, Attn: Defense Fund for Theresa Cruz, Acct. #6832217806.** Be sure to write the account # in the address and on the check.

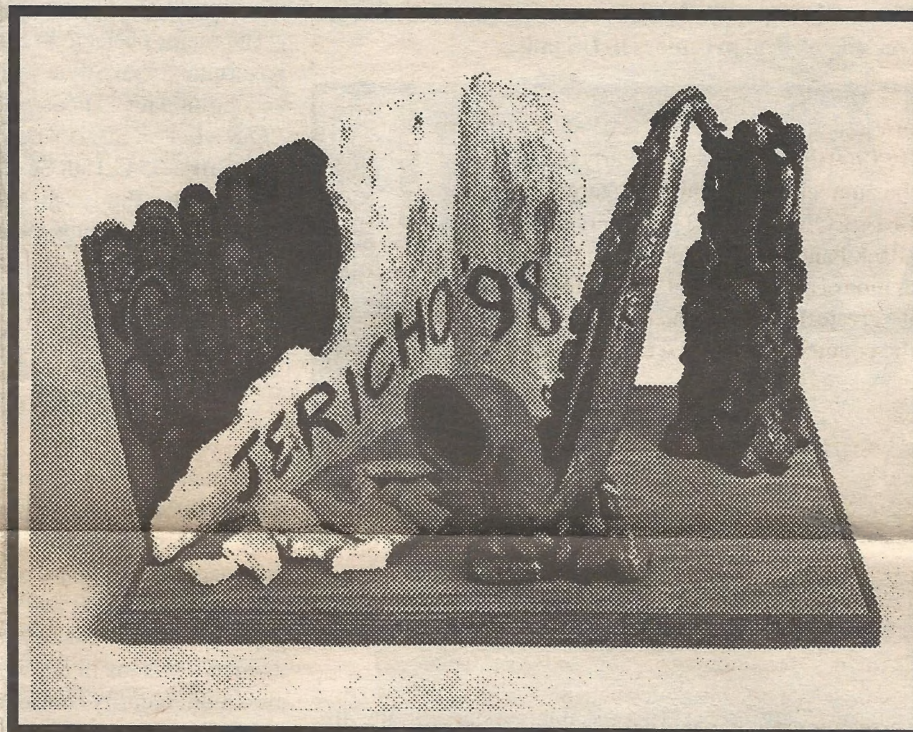
Theresa Cruz should be released immediately on bail and the appeal of the federal court's ruling should be dropped.

Marilyn Buck Tuition Fund

A group of friends of Marilyn Buck are raising much needed funds for her college studies. Marilyn, an anti-imperialist political prisoner, has been working on her Bachelor's degree and taking classes at New College in San Francisco. Prisoners are no longer eligible for public financial aid such as Pell grants.

Marilyn has designed and built a stunning clay sculpture entitled "Jericho '98", a moving tribute to our comrades who have survived decade after decade in U.S. prisons. We are selling raffle tickets at \$2 each for the sculpture. The proceeds will help pay Marilyn's tuition and book expenses. The raffle will be held in January 1999. Any remaining money will be donated to Jericho '98 and to support other political prisoners.

Requests for raffle tickets and donations can be sent to Friends of Marilyn Buck, c/o Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, 100 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA 94102. Make checks out to LSPC/MJB. The sculpture will be on display at Critical Resistance Conference (see related article, page 1) and can be viewed on the web at www.prisonactivist.org/pps+pows/buck.html.



Jericho '98, Sculpture by Marilyn Buck

FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

The Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition is initiating a campaign to force Pennsylvania's Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille to recuse himself from ruling on Mumia's case.

The Campaign was proposed and enthusiastically accepted at the national meeting of Mumia groups, sponsored by the International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and held in Philadelphia on July 5. As you are probably aware, the case is still before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. The Supreme Court has the power to release Mumia, to grant him a new trial, to uphold his conviction but have his sentence reviewed, or to fully reject his appeal. The last option would open the door to an immediate signing of the death warrant, and a subsequent filing of a habeas corpus brief by Mumia's attorneys.

Mumia's attorneys say the Supreme Court decision could be imminent or it might not be issued for many more months. Mumia, and we in turn, will only find an immediate release or a new trial an acceptable decision. Local protests and a mass protest in Philly are already being planned if the death warrant is signed.

FINALLY A LITTLE VICTORY: on August 25, a federal appeals court ruled that prison officials must stop reading the legal mail of Mumia Abu-Jamal and also allow him to write professionally.

For more information about the new campaign contact:

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition - NYC, PO Box 650, New York, NY 10009

Int'l Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 19709 Philadelphia PA 19143 mumia@aol.com - www.mumia.org

Oscar is out of Marion!!!!!!

A huge victory must be celebrated. Oscar Lopez Rivera is out of Marion. Oscar was transferred from Marion where he spent 10 of the last 12 years in solitary confinement (he spent 2 other years in solitary at ADX Florence).

We would like to thank all those people who have written letters to the authorities regarding their treatment of Oscar. It is suspected Oscar will be soon transferred to Terre Haute, IN. He is currently being held at Oklahoma City in the Federal transfer holding center of the BOP.

We still have to keep up the pressure though, the White House has stated they will make a decision about clemency for our prisoners this year. We must make sure the decision is the right one. Write President Clinton and Janet Reno today. We must continue to place the demand! **Free ALL Puerto Rican political prisoners and Prisoners of War. Free all political prisoners in US jails.**



Oscar Lopez in his cell

1998 Walkathon

Out of Control received a mailing announcing the 4th Annual Prisoners Fight AIDS Walkathon, to be held on Labor Day weekend at FCI Dublin. By decision of the prison administration, this year is sponsored and organized by the prison's Drug Program ("DAP") instead of the peer education group, PLACE (Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education), which has always done the walkathons and the AIDS work at Dublin.

We asked the political prisoners who are members of PLACE whether they wanted us to support the walkathon. They said yes. They feel that the work itself is most important. They are participating in the walkathon, supporting it, and hoping it will be a success even though they are disappointed to be excluded from the organizing of the event. They ask that readers of Out of Time contribute to the walkathon, as the money will be distributed to: WORLD (Women Organized to Fight Life-threatening Diseases), Sunburst Projects (Camp Sunburst for HIV+ children), and The HIV in Prison Project. You can write the name of one of the political prisoners as the person you're sponsoring.

Send check or money order to: St. Augustine's Catholic Church, c/o DAP-AIDS Walkathon, 3999 Bernal Ave., Pleasanton, CA 94566

**Don't forget to save
November 7 for the
annual Sparks Fly! event**
see page 1 for details

STILL NO JUSTICE FOR SILVIA

In April, of this year, the US government rejected Italy's fifth request for the repatriation of Silvia Baraldini under the Strasbourg Convention. Article 23 of that Convention entitles countries which cannot reach an agreement to appeal to the Council of Europe for arbitration. In May, the Italian government requested that the Council of Europe's Committee on Penal Affairs "facilitate a friendly settlement of the difficulties that have arisen out of the application of the Strasbourg Convention between the Italian government and the US government."

The Council of Europe considered Silvia's case in Strasbourg, France JUNE 8-10, 1998. The Italian defense committees for Silvia mobilized 300 supporters in front of the Council of Europe together with officials representing 75 Italian Regions, Provinces and Cities, who continue to fight for Silvia's transfer. Silvia's attorney, Elizabeth Fink, and two members of the US committee were in Strasbourg for this important event. This was a unique opportunity to strengthen the cooperation between the Italian and the American committees.

The seven countries represented by the Committee on Penal Affairs (France, Great Britain, Sweden, Turkey, Germany, Belgium and Italy) unanimously endorsed the request for Silvia's transfer to her homeland. This document is not binding, but it is significant that the strongest allies of the United States voted in favor of her transfer.

This event may represent an important turning point for Silvia's case. The intervention of the Council of Europe was a primary goal of our last campaign, and thanks to our common efforts and hard work, this goal has become a reality! Silvia thanks you all for the international support which made this possible and to remember that there are over 150 other political prisoners in the United States.

The major obstacle to Silvia's transfer is the US government's continuing demand for assurances from the Italian government that Silvia will serve her full sentence in an Italian prison. Our campaign is for the US to repatriate Silvia unconditionally. Thousands of prisoners have been returned to their homelands. WHY NOT SILVIA?

Our work on Silvia's behalf continues. For more info contact:

CRSBI: 3543 18th Street #30 PO Box 02-1140
San Francisco, CA 94110 Brooklyn, NY 11202
<http://www.justice-for-silvia.org>

JOIN THE CARAVAN FOR PRISONERS' HUMAN RIGHTS!

You can't pick up the newspaper without reading about the murder and abuse of prisoners or the growth of the prison industrial complex. California leads the nation in prisoners' deaths, guard brutality, three strikes you're out, and medical neglect and abuse. With the largest prison population in the country, California has the two largest women's prisons in the world and the largest number of maximum security control units in the country.

California has built 21 prisons and only one university since 1984. Nationally, over the past twenty years, state government expenditures on prisons increased by 30 percent while spending on higher education fell by 18 percent.

Substandard medical care for California prisoners has caused the unnecessary deaths of many people behind the walls. Prisoners with HIV and other serious illnesses are denied competent medical care, special diets and lifesaving treatment therapies. Despite a recently settled class action lawsuit, the medical neglect and abuse of women prisoners has increased. Recently, prison advocates have received many letters from women both in the security housing unit (SHU) and the general population at Valley State Prison for Women (in Chowchilla) documenting the sexual abuse, physical and psychological violence and constant harassment of women there. Conditions have worsened significantly for California's prisoners. With the repeal of the inmate bill of rights, prisoners no longer have access to the media and most prisoners are no longer eligible for overnight family visits.

The California prison state extends all the way to the Mexican border where undocumented immigrants are shot and brutalized by border police and held indefinitely in security housing units called detention centers.

We Must Demand An End to the Human Rights Abuses Against California's Prisoners!!!

On September 25-27, thousands of prisoner advocates, former prisoners, and activists will attend Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex. We hope to make the caravan for prisoners' human rights, the next logical step of this historic gathering.

October marks the opening of Amnesty International's campaign to expose human rights violations in the U.S. Help us focus attention on the human rights abuses faced by the men and women incarcerated in California and across the country.

Join us on October 17 for a noon rally at Chowchilla's women's prisons to demand an end to medical neglect, sexual abuse, the death penalty and torture. Then travel with us for a 2:30 p.m. rally (and join with hundreds of people from around the state) outside the gates of Corcoran prison in Corcoran, California, which has recently been exposed in public legislative hearings and in the media for its crimes of torture, rape and murder of men prisoners.

Sponsored by: California Prison Focus, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Chicano/Mexicano Prison Project, Families to Amend California Three Strikes, Center for Constitutional Rights, Women's Positive Legal Action Network, HIV in Prison Committee, The Beat Within, Bureau of Public Secrets, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, News & Letters, International Action Center, Friends Outside/Santa Ana, American Friends Service Committee - Criminal Justice Program, Criminal Justice Consortium, Stolen Lives Project, National Association of Social Workers - Women's Council Prison Project, North Coast XPress, Prison Activist Resource Center, Pelican Bay Information Project, Out of Control Lesbian Committee..

Carpools will leave the Bay area (San Francisco and Oakland) at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 17. For more information call (510) 533-2590 or (415) 821-6545.